

ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	EEB-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	AEX-00	CEA-01	COME-00
	CPR-00	CTME-00	INL-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00	DOTE-00	PERC-00
	PDI-00	DS-00	DHSE-00	EXIM-01	OIGO-00	E-00	FAAE-00
	FBIE-00	VC1-00	FRB-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	ITC-01	LAB-01	MOFM-00	MOF-00	VCIE-00	NEA-00	NRC-00
	NSAE-00	ISN-00	NSCE-00	OES-00	OIG-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00
	PM-00	GIWI-00	SCT-00	ISNE-00	DOHS-00	FMPC-00	SP-00
	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	T-00	NCTC-00	BBG-00	IIP-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	SCA-00	SAS-00
	FA-00	SWCI-00	/004W				

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FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

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INFO IGAD COLLECTIVE

SOMALIA COLLECTIVE

DIA WASHINGTON DC

CJTF HOA

CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

CIA WASHINGTON DC

AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000147

SENSITIVE

SENSITIVE

SBU DELIBERATIVE PROCESS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E AND NEA/IR

CJTF-HOA AND AFRICOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019-02-26

TAGS: PREL OVIP KNNP PBTS ECON ER IR DJ

SUBJECT: IRANIAN PRESIDENT VISITS DJIBOUTI

REF: a) 08DJIBOUTI999

CLASSIFIED BY: E. Wong, CDA; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During an official visit to Djibouti by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad February 24, Djiboutian President Guelleh praised the "good relations" between Djibouti and Iran, and underlined his support for Iran's right to develop "peaceful nuclear technology." President Guelleh visited Teheran in 2006, and several senior GODJ civilian and military officials have traveled to Iran in recent months, reportedly to sound out Iran's willingness to act as a mediator in the ongoing Djibouti-Eritrea border dispute. During his half-day visit, Ahmadinejad signed several bilateral agreements with President Guelleh, including one extending a line of credit from Iran to Djibouti's Central Bank. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Ahmadinejad's six-hour Djibouti visit preceded stops in Kenya and the Comoros. His official program consisted of a formal welcoming ceremony at Djibouti's Dubai Ports World-managed international airport, a working cabinet-level meeting including the signature of five bilateral accords, and a brief joint press conference. During the official visit, First Lady Khadra Mahamoud Haid hosted Mrs. Ahmadinejad on a separate program, including a luncheon and a tour of a GODJ-supported girls' orphanage.

¶3. (U) Ahmadinejad and Guelleh signed five agreements to 1) establish reciprocal visa waiver travel for Djiboutian and Iranian nationals, 2) create a Djibouti-Iran Commission, 3) grant a line of credit for development from Iran to the Central Bank of Djibouti, 4) begin construction of an Iranian-funded vocational training center in Djibouti, and 5) provide scholarships for Djiboutian students to study in Iran.

¶4. (C) Iran is already financing an estimated \$20 million project to construct a new building for Djibouti's National Assembly, and has agreed to fund renovations of Djibouti City's marketplace.

¶5. (U) Djibouti's state-run media covered Ahmadinejad's visit extensively. In three pages of related stories in the state-run French-language newspaper "La Nation," Guelleh praised the "good relations between Djibouti and Iran," based on common membership in the Islamic community. In other quotations as reported by "La Nation," Guelleh told Ahmadinejad: "You've demonstrated that the world can count on Iran and its people;" "at every opportunity, you've shown your sincerity as regards self-sufficiency and mastery of all technologies;" and "Iran is, by its history, a country that wants to live with other countries in peace, but also a country that fiercely defends its rights and its sovereignty." Furthermore, Guelleh expressed his "incomprehension" at the "objections of Westerners" concerning Iran's pursuit of "peaceful nuclear technology," adding that "they themselves [the West] invented nuclear technology," and that there should be no double standards. Ahmadinejad thanked Guelleh for Djibouti's role in Somalia's peace process, and declared Iran "ready to participate in the reestablishment of security" in Somalia. Furthermore, he blamed "foreign powers" for causing "tensions in our regions."

¶6. (SBU) Per Department guidance from NEA/IR, CDA a.i. did not/not attend Ahmadinejad's arrival ceremony, to which President Guelleh convoked all heads of diplomatic missions.

¶7. (C) Ahmadinejad's visit comes on the heels of several GODJ trips to Iran, including visits by Central Bank Governor Djama Mahamoud Haid (February 2009), Foreign Minister Mahamoud Ali Youssouf (November 2008), and CHOD General Ahmed Houssein Fathi and other Djiboutian military officials (July 2008). State-run media reported on some of these visits, and stated that the GODJ was potentially seeking Iran's good offices in negotiating Djibouti's stalemated border dispute with Eritrea.

¶8. (C) COMMENT. Djibouti is a master at maintaining good relations with nearly all comers. Ahmadinejad's visit follows just days after a visit by French Foreign Minister Kouchner (septel). While

maintaining generally moderate, pro-Western foreign and economic policies and acting as host to military personnel from the U.S., France, and several other Western countries, the GODJ sees no contradiction in simultaneously building up ties with Iran. Faced with Eritrea's unwillingness to cooperate with the United Nations, African Union, Arab League, or any other multilateral institutions, Djibouti seems to be casting a wide net to look for any credible actors who could succeed in brokering a diplomatic solution to the border standoff. Ahmadinejad's visit certainly signals Djibouti's receptivity to cooperate with Iran-and especially if Iran is ready to contribute to key Djiboutian development priorities such as vocational training. Yet while President Guelleh was willing to accept Iranian assistance and offer public support for Iran's right to "peaceful nuclear technology," the GODJ has not always offered Iran unqualified approval. Notably, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mahamoud Ali Youssouf told Ambassador in December (reftel) that the GODJ had enough reservations about Iran's human rights record to abstain from voting on the no-action motion against an Iran-specific resolution in the UN Third Committee and General Assembly. There is currently no Iranian diplomatic representation in Djibouti, a predominately Sunni Muslim country. END COMMENT.
WONG

To view the entire SMART message, go to URL http://repository.state.sgov.gov/_layouts/OSS_SearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:577c3310-3546-41fb-a7